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Several techniques and types of non-test data are available to a counselor prior to and during the intake interview. In an academic setting before the interview, there are six basic techniques or sources for gathering non-test data about clients. These are: (1) personal data blank, (2) autobiography, (3) questionnaire, (4) rating scale, (5) anecdotal record, and (6) cumulative records. During the interview, the counselor is himself the means for gathering information about the client. Techniques available to the counselors are: (1) statements about self, and (2) observations of the client's behavior. Research related to these techniques of non-test and self-report data is presented. Implications for practice include: (1) counselors should be familiar with the above techniques, (2) there is much non-test data available on college campus that counselors could use, and (3) counselors should be aware of the limitations of this data. Questions to be answered include those on which techniques are most accurate, what kind of information can best be gathered, and what is the format of each technique. (Author/KJ)

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UTILIZATION OF NON-TEST AND SELF-REPORT DATA IN INTAKE COUNSELING PROCEDURES[1]

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What types of non-test data about clients are available to counselors prior to and during the intake or initial interview? Are client self-report data, as might be obtained in an intake interview, valid? Questions such as these confront counselors as they study intake interview procedures. This paper reviews the techniques and types of non-test data available to the counselor prior to and during the intake interview and reviews related research reported in the professional literature. Implications for practice and research are discussed.

There are two primary distinctions which can be made between the data collected prior to the intake interview and that collected during the interview which might help us to conceptualize the type of data that counselors are dealing with. First, data collected before the interview are historical or "old." That is, time has elapsed between the time that the information was collected and the time that the counselor uses it. Second, these data are almost all written, typically by the client or another person who is in a position to rate the client. The fact that these

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data are written is important in that they are permanent and generally verifable as opposed to data which arise during the interview and might be forgotten, distorted, or completely missed by the counselor. The counselor can often study various non-test data prior to the intake interview and verify or expand upon them during the interview.

Figure 1 depicts the techniques for gathering self-report and non-self-report data prior to and during the intake interview which are discussed in this paper.

Insert Figure 1 about here

I. Gathering Non-Test Data Before the Interview

The general counseling literature refers to six basic techniques or sources for gathering non-test data about clients in an academic setting before the interview process begins. These techniques are: the personal data blank; autobiography; questionnaire; rating scale; ancedotal record; and cumulative records. The personal data blank, autobiography, and questionnaire have received much more emphasis in the literature than the other techniques.

Self-Report Data:

Autobiography. The autobiography has been described as "an individual's own written introspective report of his own life (Annis, 1967, p. 10)." Generally, two basic types of autobiographies are identified, the comprehensive or free response autobiography in which the person writes about a wide range of experiences over a relatively long period of his life, and the topical autobiography in which the person deals with a more specific topic, theme, or experience (Annis, 1967; Brammer & Shostrom, 1968).

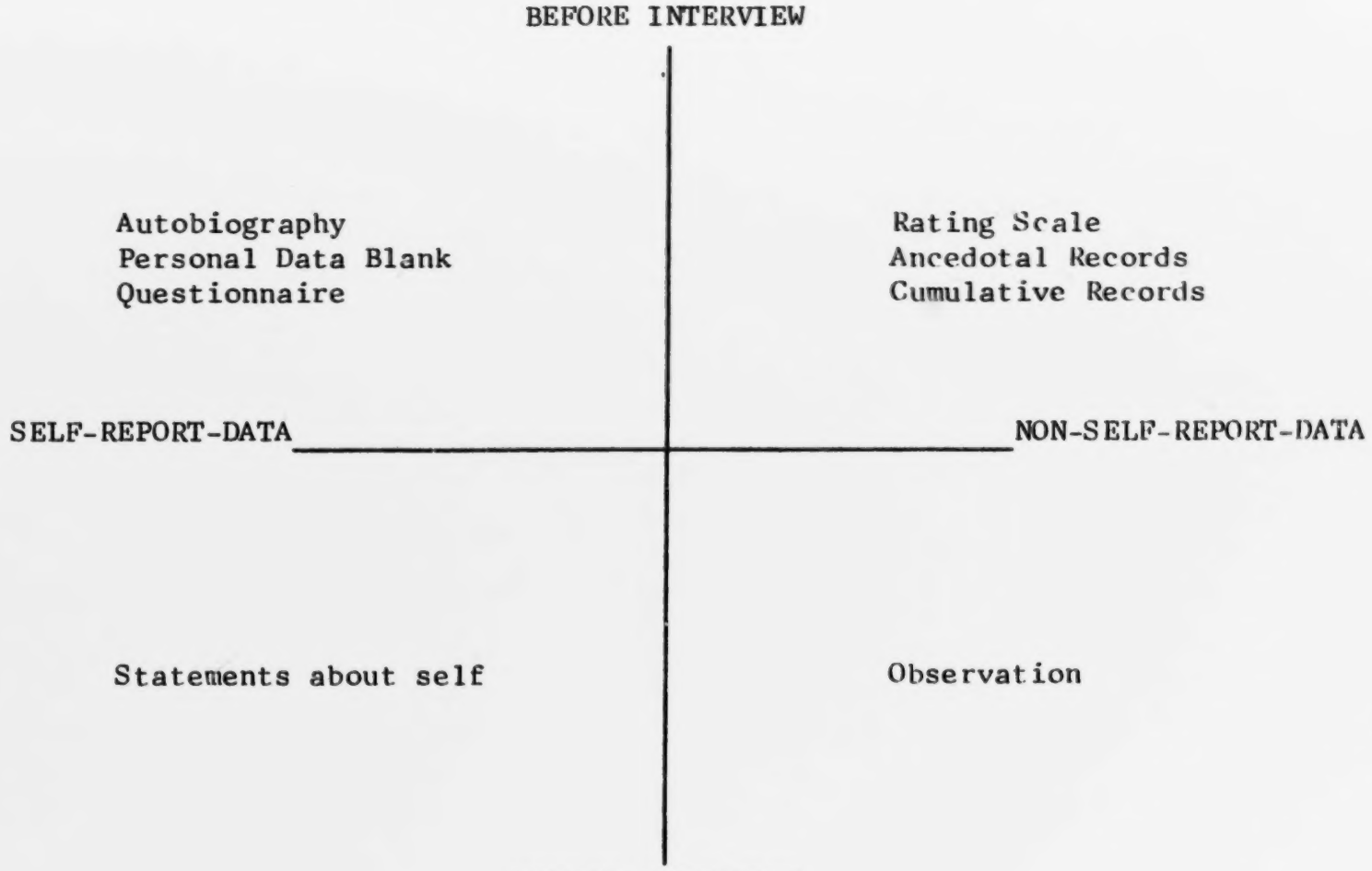

Figure 1. Graphical representation of techniques for gathering self-report and non-self-report data prior to and during the intake interview.

The information which can be obtained through the autobiography is considered to be potentially useful to the counselor. For example, Froehlich and Hoyt (1959) point out that information about the client's personality characteristics and environmental background can be obtained from the autobiography. The autobiography written prior to the intake interview would certainly yield perceptions about the client's life experiences and present problems, and give the counselor, as Tyler (1961) suggests, an idea as to what might be the appropriate focus of the interview. This technique also may provide data which make other data that the counselor has more meaningful (Warters, 1964).

In addition to this rather clear-cut overt information, other inferences can be made about the client based upon such things as what is discussed or ommitted from the autobiography, vocabulary, level or depth of expression, and organization (Froehlich & Hoyt, 1959).

Personal Data Blank. The personal data blank (PDB) is composed of questions or phrases to be completed by the client. Typically these questions and phrases concern identifying data, home and family background, academic background, vocational and avocational interests, health, peer relationships, expectations from counseling, and other items depending upon the setting in which the information is used.

Frank Parsons, the acknowledged father of vocational guidance, gave a detailed description of collecting personal data from the client (Parsons, 1909). His method is well worth reading because it is the forerunner of modern PDB techniques. However, Parsons confounds his personal data blank with so many direct questions that we might more properly consider it to be a questionnaire, the primary difference being direct questions versus more open statements which are characteristic of personal data blanks.

See Tyler (1961), pages 297-300, Williamson (1950), pages 285-536, and Froehlich and Hoyt (1959), pages 324-326 for examples of currently used personal data blanks.

Some counselors feel that "the use and interpretation of the personal data blank prior to counseling not only saves the counselor a great deal of counseling time which would otherwise be spent in collecting much the same information, but also allows him to plan more intelligently for the interview and to be more receptive to cues he recieves from the student during the interview. (Froehlich & Hoyt, 1959, p. 342)." The personal data blank administered just prior to the intake interview also gives the counselor current cross-sectional data about the client which may be used to update any cumulative or longitudinal information that he has concerning the client (viz: cumulative record, personnel record).

Questionnaire. In contrast to the personal data blank which is somewhat open-ended, the questionnaire requires that the client respond in writing to direct questions, for example, "What is your intended field of study?" As Super and Crites (1962) point out, the questionnaire is a frequently used device for gathering interview type data.

It appears that little if any distinction is made between the questionnaire and the personal data blank in much of the literature (Warters, 1964; Super and Crites, 1962; Froehlich and Hoyt, 1959; Williamson, 1950). This writer believes that such a distinction between the two techniques would be helpful, particularly when considering their use in counseling. Following Walsh (1967, p. 19), in the questionnaire method of eliciting data the client is asked "to respond in writing to direct questions, for example, 'What was your high school gradepoint average?' 'How many semesters have you been on academic probation at SUI?'" In contrast, using the personal

data blank technique the client is asked "to respond in writing to statements rather than to direct questions, for example, 'High School GPA_____;' 'Numbers of semesters on academic probation at SUI_____. (Walsh, 1967, p. 19).'" Clearly the two techniques are different.

Non-Self-Report Data:

Rating Scale. The rating scale is an attempt to quantify observations of behavior in an objective manner. The observer reports a general estimate (based on observation) of the individual's relative strengths and weaknesses with respect to the characteristics indicated on the scale (Warters, 1964).

Typically the reliability and validity of rating scales are not high. The reasons for this are widely discussed, among them being the fact that often the criteria used for rating scales are subjective judgments and usually made by untrained, often biased raters. Rating scales typically are ambiguous and can mean different things to different raters. The format may be confusing or appear awkward to many raters thus confounding the ratings. However, Warters (1964) believes that many of these difficulties can be overcome by training the raters and that the rating scale can become a much more reliable and valid source of information. Both she and Super and Crites (1962) point out that because of its high face validity the rating scale is widely used. Warters indicates that valuable data often are obtained from rating scales, while Super and Crites believe that little valuable information is provided by this technique for counseling.

Anecdotal Records. The anecdotal record consists of descriptions of behavior as observed in specific situations. Anecdotal records are similar to rating scales in that they are recordings of observed behavior, but differ in that they more completely describe the observed behavior

and often include either interpretations of the observed incident and/or recommendations arising from the observation. However, the users of anecdotal records are cautioned against confounding objective descriptions of behavior with observer interpretations of the incident or with recommendations (Froehlich & Hoyt, 1959; Warters, 1964). When interpretations or recommendations are made they should be identified as such as distinctly set off from the description of the behavior.

Anecdotal records are typically made up of a number of behavioral descriptions collected over a period of time, often throughout a student's school career. These longitudinal reports, when collected in the student's file, can become very useful in constructing a dynamic and characteristic picture of the student and help the counselor in making judgments concerning his probable behavior in other situations (Super & Crites, 1962).

Cumulative Records. Cumulative records are comprehensive records that show a student's progress and development in a number of areas over a period of time. Ideally, the cumulative record would span the time the student entered school until the time of graduation or withdrawal (Warters, 1964).

The information contained in the cumulative record can often be of significant value to counselors, particularly as a readily available source which can be tapped prior to the intake interview. However, a primary problem with the cumulative record is keeping it up to date.

Froehlich and Hoyt (1959) point out that information in the cumulative record can be supplemented and expanded upon by the use of the personal data blank administered prior to the first counseling session. I would add that perhaps the personal data blank would become part of the client's confidential counseling record and stay in the counseling office, whereas

the cumulative record may be returned to a central administrative file.

II. Gathering Non-Test Data During the Interview

Once the counselor and client are seated in the counselor's office and the interview has begun, the data gathering techniques become somewhat different than those in the foregoing discussion. The assumption underlying this discussion is that once the intake interview has begun the client is the sole source of information about himself. The counselor is himself the means for gathering information about the client. In the intake interview such an information obtaining task on the part of the counselor may be crucial because the decision as to whether to accept, refer, or reject the prospective client is often made on the basis of this interview. What then are the techniques available to the counselor?

Statements about Self. An obvious source of information about the client would be statements which he made about himself. Such statements could be volunteered by the client or obtained in an unstructured interview (Arbuckle, 1965; Brammer & Shostrom, 1968; Tyler, 1961; Froehlich & Hoyt, 1959; Warters, 1964). On the other hand, the counselor might choose to follow an interview schedule, that is, follow an outline of specific questions or topics on which he wants to obtain answers from the client (Gruen, 1968; Kerlinger, 1965; Super & Crites, 1962; Parsons, 1909; Warters, 1964). Regardless of the technique used, the counselor here is obtaining verbal self-report information. The counselor's primary task is to listen and attempt to understand what the client is communicating verbally.

Observations. A second technique by which the counselor can gain information during the intake interview is through observation of the client's behavior. Here the counselor is getting cues and perhaps responding to overt behaviors such as posture, gestures, bodily reactions,

glances, voice tone, etc. The counselor's primary task here is to observe the client and attempt to understand what he is communicating non-verbally.

III. Related Research

The studies reported in the professional literature dealing with non-test and self-report data in college counseling are few in number and those dealing with the utilization of such data in intake interview procedures are virtually non-existent. The following studies appear to be relevant to the topics of self-report data and counseling in the college setting.

Annis (1967) provided a comprehensive review of the uses and values of the autobiography in professional psychology. He pointed out that the autobiography has received much acclaim as to its use and values, but "this has been primarily at the testimonial level (Annis, 1967, p. 14)." Annis concluded that "it seems unfortunate that professional and scientific psychology have not employed and studied a communication instrument with the potential of the autobiography more extensively (Annis, 1967, p. 15)."

Walsh (1967) reported a study in which he compared the validity of three methods of eliciting self-report data for a sample of male university students. His review of the literature revealed the following: In some 27 studies concerned with the validity of interview data, 13 gave impressions of high validity, 9 of low validity, and 5 studies yielded ambiguous results. He reviewed 7 studies which looked at the validity of questionnaire data and found that 3 reported high validity and 4 reported low validity. In reviewing studies concerned with the validity of personal data blank information Walsh found three which reported high validity and two which reported that the validity of personal data blank information was suspect. Such findings certainly do not leave the counselor with

a clear cut impression of the validity of self-report data.

Walsh (1967) designed his study to investigate the accuracy of the interview, the questionnaire, and the personal data blank for collecting data which were verifiable from an examination of university student records. He found that no one method elicited more accurate self-reports than another and that a financial incentive to stimulate distortion of self-report was not associated with the accuracy of the self-report. In general, the students (men) gave quite accurate responses to the informational type items in the study.

A year later Walsh (1968) completed another study, this time looking at the accuracy of the questionnaire and interview for collecting verifiable biographical data from male and female university students under varied conditions. He reported neither the questionnaire nor the interview method elicited more accurate self-reports than the other. He also found that an experimental social incentive to distort and an experimental social and financial incentive to distort had no statistically significant effect on the accuracy of self-reports. These results held up for both sexes. Similarly to his earlier study Walsh found that the self-report information was generally accurate, showing evidence of high validity.

Holland and Lutz (1968) studied the predictive validity of a student's choice of vocation and compared the predictive validity of his self-expression with his scores on the Vocational Preference Inventory (VPI). The time intervals between choices were 8 and 12 months. The investigators found that the predictive efficiency of student self-expressions of vocational choice were about twice that of the VPI, some 68% to 86% of the self-expressions being accurate. Holland and Lutz concluded that "researchers and counselors should make greater use of a person's expressed vocational choices and that interest inventories should be used with more discrimination

(Holland & Lutz, 1968, p. 433)."

Stahmann (1969) compared the predictive validity of freshman entrance data--Occupational Interest Inventory scores (OII), achievement test scores, and responses to two questions on a university admissions questionnaire--for predicting major field of study at university graduation. For women, self-predictions, that is information from the freshman admissions questionnaire, were the most efficient predictor of major field at graduation. Seventy percent of the women had correctly indicated their field of study at graduation when they completed their admissions questionnaire as freshmen. He found that, for the men, self-predictions and those based on the interest inventory (OII) were approximately equal. Here the correct predictions were about 55%.

The American College Testing Program collects two types of self-report data as part of the ACT battery. The first of these data are the students' self-reports of their last high school grades in English, math, social studies, and natural sciences. ACT has reported (1965) that these grades are reported with a high degree of accuracy--70-84% of the student reports agree exactly with school records.

The second of the self-report data used by ACT is the descriptive information contained in the Student Profile Section of the battery. ACT has pointed out that these data "are valid in the sense that the student's response is the best single criterion; it is inconceivable that another person (a parent, teacher, or friend) or a special assessment device could provide more accurate information about a student's aspirations and expectations (ACT, 1965, p. 22)."

IV. Implications for Practice and Research

Implications for Practice: Based upon the foregoing discussion, a number of implications about the use of non-test and self-report data

in intake counseling procedures can be drawn.

1. There are techniques, shown in Figure 1 and discussed in the paper, available to the counselor which can be used to elicit information from the client prior to and during the intake interview. Basically these techniques are client self-reports and observations made by the counselor or another person. The counselor should be familiar with these techniques and use them whenever appropriate.

2. It would seem that on most college and university campuses there is a great deal of non-test information about students that could be obtained for use by the counselor prior to the intake (initial) counseling interview. Specifically, admissions questionnaire data might be available from the admissions office; biographical or other background information from the financial aids office; health information from the student health service; and academic information from the registrar's office.

3. Another implication for the practicing counselor would be that he should be aware of the limits of self-report and non-test data. These data are very easily distorted, both consciously and unconsciously. However, these data can also be absolutely accurate and valuable to counseling. The appropriate practice for the counselor would be to be aware of these limitations of self-report and non-test data and work within them by checking validity whenever possible.

4. The counselor must be aware of the fact that the evidence regarding the validity of self-report and non-test data is not clear cut. He cannot flatly reject the validity of such data, for some data such as self-reports of grade-point (American College Testing Program, 1965; Walsh, 1967), intended choice of vocation (Holland & Lutz, 1968), and self-predictions of major field of study (Stahmann, 1969) have been shown to be valid. However, the counselor cannot naively believe that all self-report data are

valid. This has not been demonstrated.

Implications for research: There are many questions regarding the utilization of non-test and self-report data in intake counseling procedures which remain unanswered. The following are suggestive of the research that must be done.

1. Most basically we must study the question regarding what kinds of questions and what information can be accurately obtained by self-report and non-test techniques. Thus far studies have suggested that self-reports of college students regarding their grade point average (American College Testing Program, 1965; Walsh, 1967), intended choice of vocation (Holland & Lutz, 1968), and intended field of study (Stahmann, 1969) are accurate, but little else has been studied with college student populations.

2. The question as to whether one technique for obtaining self-report information from the client is more accurate than another remains unanswered. Studies suggest that there is little difference among the accuracy of the interview, questionnaire, and personal data blank (Walsh, 1967, 1968). However, these studies are only a beginning in an area of complex interacting variables.

3. In looking at each technique of eliciting self-report data, counselors need to study the format of the technique. For example, one study (Stahmann, 1969) reported that seemingly similar questions on a university admissions questionnaire yielded different answers as to intended field of study which resulted in differing predictive validity. Why? How do counselors ask questions or elicit information from clients so as to maximize accuracy of responses?

4. On-going study of the format of written self-report devices is necessary. Is the questionnaire or personal data blank ambiguous, difficult

to understand, redundant or threatening to the client?

5. Most of the self-report and non-test data that counselors use are verifiable and should be studied. Granted, the method most desirable is often a longitudinal study which is difficult, time consuming and expensive, however it must be done to answer important questions which relate directly to the counselor's effectiveness in the intake interview.

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